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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: STATEMENT ON RULE OF LAW  
IN KOSOVO

1. Post is authorized to make the following statement at the March 26, 2009 meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna:

Begin Text:

Thank you, Madame Chairwoman.

Last week here in the Permanent Council, the Ambassadors of Serbia and the Russian Federation made statements concerning the fifth anniversary of the worst inter-ethnic violence in Kosovo since the Kosovo war. We note that last week also marked the one-year anniversary of the attacks by ethnic Serb extremists on UN and NATO personnel protecting the UN courthouse in Mitrovica, Kosovo, which cost the life of a UN peacekeeper and injured many more UN police officers.

No violence is acceptable, be it Milosevic's brutal repression of Kosovar Albanians, the 2004 violence, or the Mitrovica courthouse attacks. The United States welcomes the acknowledgement of the Government of Kosovo that what happened in 2004 was unacceptable. On the March 17 anniversary of the violence, Kosovo's Prime Minister Thaci issued a public statement that the attacks on Serb churches and homes that took place in 2004 were deeply regrettable and must never be repeated. Indeed, some of the worst perpetrators of the 2004 violence were arrested, prosecuted and jailed. On the same day, Prime Minister Thaci also repeated his Government's pledge for reconciliation and cooperation for a brighter future for all of Kosovo's citizens and for the region. On March 23, Kosovo Foreign Minister Hyseni underscored this message before the UN Security Council. The Government of Kosovo is doing more than just issuing statements. It is building a positive future in accordance with its progressive constitution that guarantees far-reaching protections for its ethnic minority communities.

As Foreign Minister Hyseni outlined to the Security Council, the Government of Kosovo, with assistance from the U.S. and other concerned parties, has been actively engaged in efforts to preserve and reconstruct many of the Serbian Orthodox churches and monasteries targeted in the 2004 attacks, as well as other important cultural sites in Kosovo. The Reconstruction Implementation Committee (RIC), of which the United States has been a strong supporter, has partially or fully reconstructed 34 sites, and is scheduled to finish major reconstruction by the end of 2009. The government of Kosovo is the largest funder of the RIC. My government has donated USD 1 million for restoration and preservation of several cultural heritage sites in Kosovo, including four Serbian Orthodox sites: the Church of the Presentation of the Virgin in Lipljan, the St. Sava Church in Mitrovica, the Church of St. Archangel Michael in Stimlje, and the Budisavci Monastery in Klina.

The future of Kosovo lies in a multi-ethnic, tolerant society that works for the benefit of all of its people. We will continue to work with Kosovo, Serbia and the other countries of the region to promote lasting peace and prosperity in the

Balkans.

We encourage the government of Serbia to work constructively with an independent Kosovo and the many willing international partners engaged in the region to find pragmatic solutions to the challenges that face them and to look towards their European and Euro-Atlantic future as peaceful, stable neighbors.

Thank you, Madame Chairwoman.

End text.

CLINTON